

CLAIMS:

1. Process for controlling delivery of digital works across a communication channel such as the internet whereby there is to be paid for the content of said digital works, whereby the process is executable on a server computer (200) and a client (requester) computer (300) (so-called end-hosts), said process comprising the steps of:

- a) a set of negotiation steps in which the client and the server agree to and configure for delivery of the content of a digital work;
- b) creating at the server and executing a regular flow of packets ($100_{1...z}$) lasting for some period of time (so-called "streaming"), whereby the packet size is small with respect to the total size of said digital work, of said content from the server to the client using a transmission or transport protocol, whereby the client is requested to acknowledge the received content;
- c) initiation of a return traffic of at least one acknowledgement code (ACK) by the client to the server whereby a payment token is associated with each acknowledgement code or with a number of acknowledgement codes;
- d) validation by the server that each acknowledgement code requested of the client is received by the server;
- e) continuation of the streaming of said content by the server only if the acknowledgement code(s) requested of the client is (are) received as specified by the server;
- f) accumulation of the payment tokens associated with the acknowledgement codes received from the client in a pay-for-each-packet-received-as-acknowledged-by-the-client mode of operation;
- g) arrangement of billing of and payment by the client for all received packets on the basis of at least said accumulated payment tokens.

2. Process for controlling delivery of digital works across a communications channel according to claim 1, characterized in that in step (c) or step (e) acknowledgement by the client is associated with at least one packet of the forwarding flow from the server to the client.

3. Process for controlling delivery of digital works across a communications channel according to claim 1 or claim 2, characterized in that in step (e) continuation of the streaming of packets with content by the server occurs whereby a certain number of packets may be transmitted while a number of acknowledgement codes in transit less than or equal to another pre-determined number of acknowledgement codes encompassed in the credit window have not yet been received by the server.

4. Process for controlling delivery of digital works across a communications channel according to claim 3, characterized in that the size of said credit window is adaptable to the number of acknowledgement codes received from the client.

5. Process according to any of claims 1-4 for use in conducting business operations or commercial transactions, comprising regulation of payment based on received return traffic.

6. Process according to claim 5 for use in conducting business operations or commercial transactions, whereby in addition billing is dependent on the transmission rate and/or on the length of the transmission session and/or on the loss rate of the transmitted digital packets.

7. A method of sending and/or receiving packets by a system comprising a server and a client, said method comprising one or more steps including at least step (c) of a process according to any of claims 1-6.

8. A method of sending and/or receiving packets by a server, comprising one or more steps including at least step (c) or step (e) of a process according to any of claims 1-6.

9. A method of sending and/or receiving packets by a client, comprising one or more steps including at least step (c) or step (e) of a process according to any of claims 1-6.

10. A computer programme comprising instructions, which instructions include at least code defining the processes or functions to be performed with respect to acknowledgement codes and payment tokens associated with said acknowledgement codes,

for causing a programmable processing apparatus having or being connected to transmission hardware to become operable to execute the method according to claim 7.

11. A computer programme comprising instructions, which instructions include at least code defining the processes or functions to be performed with respect to acknowledgement codes and payment tokens associated with said acknowledgement codes, for causing a programmable processing apparatus having or being connected to transmission hardware to become operable to execute the server-related steps of the method according to claim 8.

12. A computer programme comprising instructions, which instructions include at least code defining the processes or functions to be performed with respect to acknowledgement codes and payment tokens associated with said acknowledgement codes, for causing a programmable processing apparatus having or being connected to transmission hardware to become operable to execute the client-related steps of the method according to claim 9.

13. Computer programme according to any of claims 10-12 on or in a carrier comprising a storage medium.

14. Computer programme according to any of claims 10-12 with or in a transmissible carrier such as an electrical or optical signal

15. Transmission entity of which a computer programme according to any of claims 10-12 forms a component.

16. A system for controlling delivery of digital works across a communication channel such as the internet whereby there is to be paid for the content of said digital works, whereby the system is operable on a server computer and a client (requester) computer, whereby the system comprises:

one or more repositories for storing and exchanging digital works, each of said digital repositories comprising:
storage means for storing digital works and usage rights attached to said digital works;

transaction processing means having a requester mode of operation for requesting access to a digital work, said request specifying a usage right, to which usage right is attached a payment token, and a server mode of operation for processing requests to access said requested digital work based on said usage right specified in said request and usage rights attached to said digital work;

transmission means for transmission of the digital work from the server to the requester, said transmission means operable under a protocol suitable for carrying out the process according to any of claims 1-6.

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